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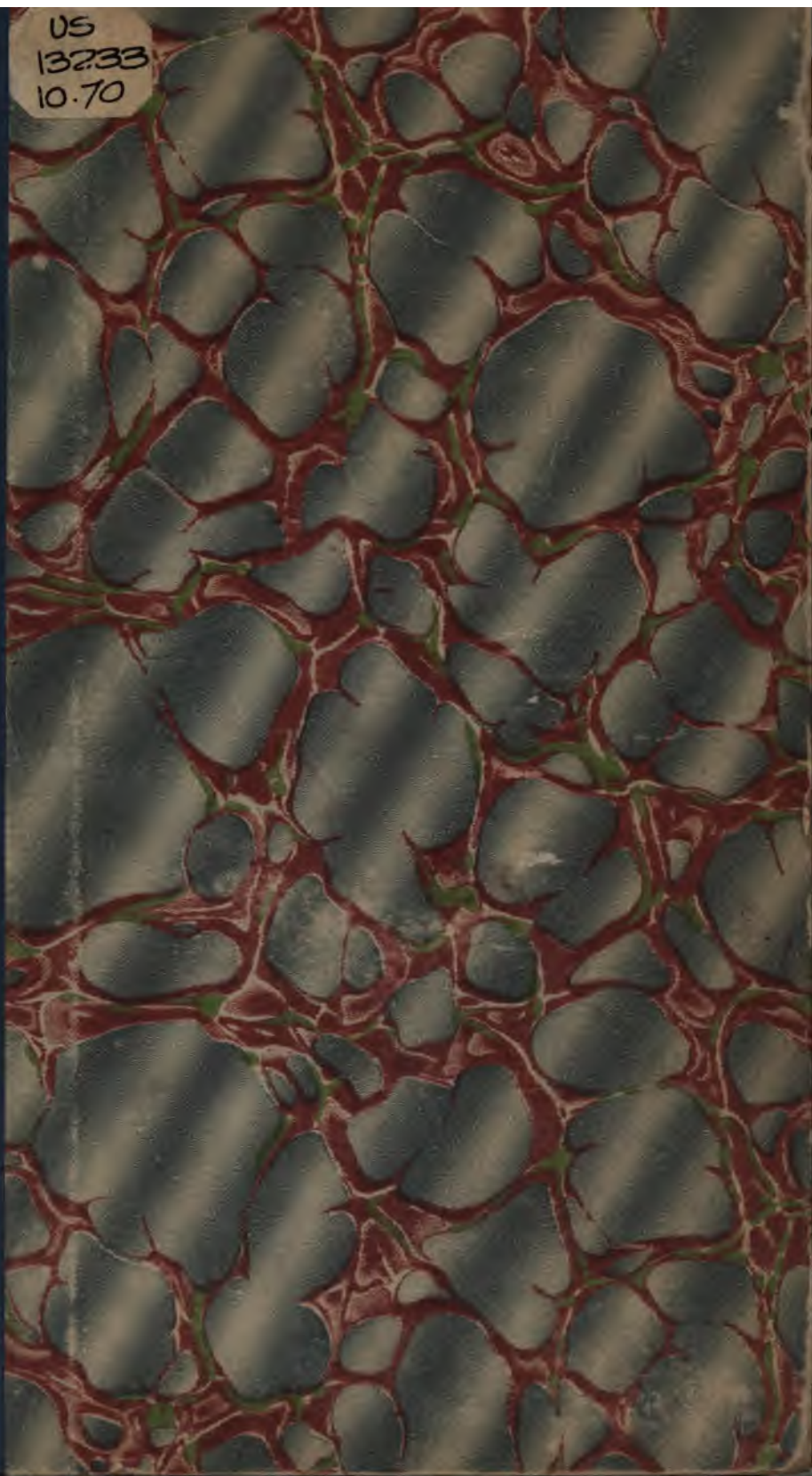
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VALEDICTORY DISCOURSE,

PREACHED TO THE

SOUTH CHURCH AND PARISH IN DEDHAM,

DECEMBER 20, 1829.

BY WILLIAM COGSWELL.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:
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JUNE 15, 1927

DISCOURSE.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, FAREWELL.

ONLY LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE AS BECOMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST ;
THAT WHETHER I COME AND SEE YOU, OR ELSE BE ABSENT, I MAY HEAR
OF YOUR AFFAIRS, THAT YE STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE MIND,
STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL.

2 COR. xiii. 2. PHIL. i. 27.

THE former of these passages of scripture is a part of the apostle's valedictory address, in the conclusion of his second epistle to the Christians at Corinth. It is expressive of his sincere and fervent desires for their present and future well being.—The latter passage is addressed to the Philippians, and is an exhortation to them to walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they were called. Thus demeaning themselves, they would be succeeded and blessed, and the apostle's heart would be gladdened, whether he came to see them, or heard of their affairs, because they would stand fast as one body, actuated by one spirit, striving together in one mind and heart for the faith and obedience of the gospel.

May I not, my beloved friends, in parting with you, on this solemn and affecting occasion, pertinently adopt the language of the text, "Finally, brethren, farewell." Most sincerely and devoutly, do I wish your highest welfare in time and in eternity. While I thus assure you, that this is my heart's desire and prayer to God, it may not be improper to exhort you, "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ ; that whether I come and see you, or else

be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."

I propose, in this discourse, to point out the way, in which *Individuals, Parishes, and Churches*, as such, may expect prosperity and happiness. I am led to a consideration of these topics by the words of the apostle, selected for my text; and by an ardent desire for your best interest, temporal and eternal.

I. I am to point out the way, in which *Individuals* may expect prosperity and happiness.

Man, naturally, is in a revolted state, alienated from God and a life of holiness. Disorder reigns within and without him. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward." Consequent upon this, are the frowns of indignant Heaven. A paradise is turned into a hell. Adversity and misery stalk abroad in the earth. There is no peace to the wicked, and the wages of sin is death. Our world is one vast Aceldama, one great charnel-house. Death has reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to the present time. Besides all this, multitudes are now experiencing the second death in regions of utter despair and interminable woe—the gnawings of that worm, which shall never die, and the pains of that fire, which shall never be quenched. And multitudes more of hardened impenitent sinners will be doomed to endure the blackness of darkness forever—the most unutterable anguish. Such are the evil effects of sin. And nothing, my hearers, but a restoration to the entire love of God, and the perfect obedience of gospel holiness, will redeem man from that wretchedness, to which he is by sin exposed. The renovation of the heart by the Holy Ghost; supreme affection for Him, who is the fountain of all good; repentance for every deviation from moral rectitude; faith which restores man to

confidence in God—these qualify for heaven ; these in the soul are heaven begun—prelibations of the blessedness of saints in light. These Christian graces will be followed by holy obedience. If created anew in Christ Jesus, we are created unto good works. If love to God and man pervades our breasts, it is for us the fulfilling of the law, and leads us to keep the divine commandments. If we are filled with true godly sorrow for sin, we shall bring forth fruits meet for repentance. If we have faith, which is of divine operation, it will work by love, purify the heart, overcome the world, and take hold on heaven.—These graces constitute the religion of Jesus Christ, and are necessary to prepare men for happiness in this life, and for blessedness beyond the grave. “The righteous shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so ; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” “The way of the ungodly shall perish.”—I would add, that the moral virtues, which characterize the Christian, flow as naturally from the principles of holiness, as streams do from their fountain ; and that no person has reason to expect prosperity and happiness, who is not in his habits industrious, prudent, honest and temperate. “The law of our nature is, that nothing good or great is to be acquired without toil and industry.” The Jews had a proverb, “He that is not brought up to a trade is brought up for the gallows.” Idle persons are a curse to themselves and the community. “From this class our prisons are peopled ; and by them the scaffold is furnished with” its victims. Prudence and honesty in deportment are absolutely requisite to ensure reputation and success. Temperance is a cardinal virtue, and without it no one can be good and great. “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing ; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” “My son, keep sound wisdom

and discretion. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." "The integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things."—Hence we see, that Individuals must be religious in heart and moral in behaviour, would they expect prosperity and happiness in this life, or eternal salvation and blessedness in the life to come. I proceed,

II. To point out the way, in which a *Parish*, or a *Religious Society*, formed for the support of the gospel and its ordinances, may expect prosperity and happiness.

Such a Society, in order to flourish, must be established upon right principles. The compact must be rational and scriptural, securing true religious liberty to those, embraced by the bond of confederation. Of this character are the parochial Societies, usually denominated Congregational, which exist so generally in New England. Our pious Forefathers were truly republican, in a religious as well as a political view, and their intention was to adopt such a platform of religious Society, as that the civil and religious rights and privileges of both individuals and communities should not be infringed.

The individuals, who compose the corporation, should be of one mind and heart in regard to all the objects, for which they are associated. They should act in concert. Union is strength. "A three-fold cord is not quickly broken." They should, too, act with determination and zeal. These will give success. A body of people united, determined, and zealous, may accomplish almost any thing they please. Behold Leonidas, with a little band of Spartans, brave, at the Straits of Thermopylæ, the army of Xerxes, consisting of hundreds of thousands. Courage and unyielding resolution greatly helped Alexander to conquer the world. These vastly aided Luther, Knox, Buchanan and others in their holy achievements. In any enterprize, fixed determination is

half-accomplishment. On the contrary, indecision or hesitancy wholly unfits for action, and, in a Society, is death or paralysis. A people possessed of such a spirit, and lukewarm in their own cause, will most assuredly not flourish.—Promptness in a Society should characterize the discharge of every duty. And readiness on the part of individuals to make every desirable effort for the public good, will give animation to the whole body.—A Society should always act with independence and firmness, though not with self-will or obstinacy. A servile disposition will beget timidity, and no spirit is worse, when surrounded by enemies violent and powerful.

The concerns of a Society should be managed always by those, who are friendly to it. Every officer should consult the good of the body, for which he acts. While there was an Achan in the camp, Israel could not succeed. The same spirit also should pervade every breast. The feelings of those, who compose the corporation, should be identified with its prosperity. The maxim should be indelibly impressed upon every mind, 'Our Society we will love and support.'

Care should be taken to preserve the body from contamination. While, according to the laws of this Commonwealth, all who belong to a Society have the right to retain their membership if they choose, yet none should be admitted, who are unfriendly to its interests. Self-preservation is a law of nature. A Society, therefore, ought always to possess and exercise the power and privilege of admitting or rejecting, at its option, persons who apply for membership. This power and privilege, it is conceived, are given to Societies by the existing constitution and laws of Massachusetts.*

Would a Society prosper, it should never interfere with the rights and immunities of the Church. It is for the welfare of both, that the privileges of neither should be infringed. The excellence of Congregationalism is, that the Church and Society live together as distinct bodies in partnership, and as independent bodies, co-operating in their proceedings. There

* See Note A.

is a reciprocation of civil and spiritual interests and influence embodied in Congregational polity.

In order to flourish, a Society should never be incumbered with debt. Pecuniary embarrassment will always depress and paralyze. Those composing the corporation will be disheartened ; and those without its pale will remain there from this and the additional consideration, that they wish not to incur expenses, to which they were in no wise accessary, and by which they are in no wise benefitted. Hence freedom from debt is of the utmost importance, and, consequently, every Society, which is thus involved, should make strenuous efforts to liquidate its debts, and shun, as it would the pestiferous Simoom, this cruel yoke of bondage.

That a Society may prosper, it must be constantly supplied with the ministrations of the word of God. If it cannot live while attempting to support the gospel, it cannot live by neglecting to do it. A Society will pay up arrearages faster, while maintaining and enjoying the sacred ministry, than while without it. If it be destitute of the ordinary means of grace, the great stimulus to religious exertion is lost. It is always more costly and difficult to live without the gospel than with it. And a Society should endeavor to afford to its minister a competent support, that he may give himself wholly to his important, laborious, and responsible work. The Levite that is within its gates should never be forgotten ; for the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel ; that they who sow to the people in spiritual things, should reap of their carnal things.

I would not fail to mention, that a regular and punctual attendance upon the services of religion is greatly conducive to the prosperity of a Society. It was for the spiritual benefit of the body politic, that an organization or civil compact was formed. Public worship ought, therefore, to be constantly observed. The apostolic injunction is, " Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." People should not be frightened from the sanctuary by

the rising cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, or a few flakes of descending snow, or a few drops of rain, distilling as the dew. No trifling cause should detain them from public services. But as often as the Sabbath returns, they should repair to the sacred temple, and there attend upon the messages of God, not with a cavilling, captious spirit, but with a meek and teachable disposition, and as those do who expect to give an account how they hear. While convened in the house of God, circumspection in demeanor is very essential. Unless the auditory conduct themselves with propriety, there is no hope of their being spiritually benefitted by the dispensation of divine truth.

A Society should love its minister, because he is the messenger of God, and for his work's sake. When this is the case, it will be much more likely to profit by his ministrations. While a people remember, that ministers are men of like passions with themselves, they should exercise that charity, which suffereth long and is kind, endureth all things, and never faileth. Were a Society, formed for the support of the gospel and its ordinances, thus to feel and to act, it might reasonably expect to prosper and be blessed.

III. I will now endeavor to point out the way in which a *Church* may expect prosperity and happiness.

First of all, a Church must be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." Upon this Rock of ages, this sure foundation, it must be built with "gold, silver, and precious stones." It must have a Confession of Faith, which it acknowledges, and a Covenant, into which it enters. These are necessary in the nature of things. Indeed, the Church, most latitudinarian in sentiments and practice, and violent against creeds and covenants, has its faith and covenant, implied if not expressed. Though contentious for peace, and intolerant for toleration in these respects, it is still circumscribed in its belief and action. While the Orthodox,

in faith and practice, exclude the Liberal, (Unitarians and Universalists,) from the pale of their church; the Liberal, (Unitarians and Universalists,) in faith and practice, exclude Pagans, Mohamedans and Jews, from the pale of their church. Both have their limits in creed and fellowship. The truth is, it is not the form or possession of a confession of faith and a covenant, in either case, that is condemned, but their contents. What one holds dear and sacred, the other deems not agreeable to truth or godliness. Thus all churches have their confessions of faith and covenants, though they may not be the same in nature, extent, or explicitness. They should, however, be in accordance with the gospel, and be full and explicit. The maxim with some, 'No matter what a person believes provided his conduct be good,' is both unscriptural and unphilosophical, and when adopted, has a deleterious effect upon the heart and life. No person, ordinarily, is better in his religious feelings and practices than his faith. Would a Church prosper and be happy, it must, then, have a confession of faith and a covenant, and thus be as "a garden enclosed." Its creed is not to be viewed in any wise as superseding the word of God; but merely as a symbol of its faith. This is important, as it will tend to preserve the members of the Church "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God," that they "be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." The covenant, too, which is an expression of the scriptural ties, by which Christians, embodied in a Church state, are bound by the King of Zion, will have a tendency to induce them to "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness," and "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Thus united and bound together in faith and love, they will be one in action, and "concentrated action is powerful action." Union of feeling, purpose, and conduct, are absolutely essential to the prosperity and happiness of a Church. This,

therefore, is most desirable, though it be stigmatized as puritanical rigidity. Disunion in a Church will destroy all confidence, result in discord and confusion, and blast all good hopes. A house divided against itself cannot stand.

A Church, as individuals, and as a body, should seek to be imbued deeply with the spirit of true piety and holy obedience. They should especially, in the present day, imbibe the spirit of their Master. They should exhibit, in all their conduct, a moral heroism, marshal themselves on the side of truth, enlist their energies in every holy enterprise, and "come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." In the discharge of duty they should fearlessly encounter difficulties which may arise, and be appalled by no dangers which may seem to impend, trusting in God, and remembering that the Church flourished more in the days of persecution, than when protected by Constantine and the Cæsars, and that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." They should, too, possess constantly a healthy and active tone of religious feeling, and prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy. A church of this description will spread itself "like the green bay tree," "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season." It would flourish on the snowy mountains of Greenland, among the glaciers of Switzerland, or in the desert of Zahara. The twelve apostles were ^a host. In the spirit of martyrs, they went forth as champions in the holy war, and spread the triumphs of divine grace from east to west, from north to south. Certain success attended their labors, and the banner of gospel love and peace waved in every land. Look at the Moravians. By their united, steady and persevering efforts, with small means, they have accomplished wonders in the missionary cause, and greatly attracted the attention of an admiring world.

It is highly important, that discipline, mild and yet efficient, should be maintained in the Church. Unless this is the

case it will never appear beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.

“Order is Heaven’s first law.”

Every civil kingdom has its laws and government, and why should not the kingdom of Christ? Where there are no laws, there can be no government; and where there is no government, all laws become mere advice, and misrule ensues. Church members, therefore, should watch over each other with Christian affection, and reform themselves, and their erring brethren in covenant. They should not hate their brethren in their hearts; they should in any wise rebuke their neighbors, and not suffer sin upon them. For the reclaiming of offenders, delivering the Church from reproach, and inspiring others with the fear of offence, the immoral in practice and heretical in doctrine, should be reprovèd and admonished, and, continuing impenitent and unreformed, should be cut off from all Church rights and privileges agreeably to the instruction of Him, who sitteth King in Zion. All this, the comfort, edification, and prosperity of the Church as a body, and of the individuals disciplined in particular, require. All covenant engagements, Christians should ever maintain sacred and inviolate. Every transaction of the Church should be performed with decency and order. There should be great caution in the admission of members. The doors of the Church ought to be faithfully guarded, that no unhallowed feet may enter. Examination should be practised, that the individuals, applying for admittance, may give the reason for the hope that is in them, and that the Church may be enabled to act understandingly. A difference should be made between the precious and the vile. Unless a candidate for admission exhibits preponderating evidence of a change of heart, it is the part of wisdom to reject him. But as the people of God cannot discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, they are liable to be deceived, and sometimes are deceived in respect to a person’s piety, and it is a matter

of astonishment, that they are not more often deceived than they are.

The members of a Church are bound to "let their light so shine before men, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven." They should never let their good be evil spoken of. In doing this, it becomes them to live circumspectly, and in conformity to all the requisitions of the gospel.

Every Church should observe seasons of prayer and religious conference. Prayer is the means of obtaining blessings, and there is an indissoluble connexion between the means and the blessings. It was thus ordained in the counsels of eternity.

"Prayer ardent opens heav'n, lets down a stream
Of glory, on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity."

No exertions of ours will avail anything without the blessing of God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Hence arises the vast importance of prayer. And hence the propriety and expediency of social meetings in order to supplicate the throne of mercy. "They that fear the Lord should speak often one to another, and the Lord will hearken and hear it, and a book of remembrance will be written before him for them, that fear the Lord, and that think upon his name." Impressed with the beneficial effects of religious conference, the apostle says, addressing himself to Christians, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, and let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ," and "exhort one another daily."

Brotherly love should prevail in the Church. Its members should be cemented together by holy affection, and their deportment towards each other should be such as to constrain the observing world around them to exclaim, "Behold how these Christians love one another." They should be careful to let no root of bitterness spring up among them,

and be at peace among themselves, and then the God of love and peace will be with them.—A Church composed of such members, and living in such a manner, would be built up in spite of the machinations and wrath of earth and hell, and be beautified and blessed.

Having finished what I proposed as the body of my Discourse, it now remains to take a retrospect of my ministry among you, as is usual on occasions like the present, and to close with some addresses.—The first time I ever preached in this Parish was on December 25, 1814. Having officiated here four Sabbaths, the Church, after being destitute of a Pastor for nearly three years, extended an invitation to me to settle with them in the gospel ministry, which bears date January 30, 1815. The Parish, as soon as a legal meeting could be convened, concurred, without any opposition, in the invitation. After a lapse of five weeks, I gave an answer to the call in the affirmative. April 26, 1815, I was solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry among you. From that time to the present, I have endeavored, as God has given me ability, to preach the gospel to you faithfully, plainly, prudently and kindly, and to do this, without equivocation or reserve. I have not knowingly perverted the Scriptures nor kept back anything profitable for godly edifying. In preaching the everlasting gospel, I have not merely uttered words, but my soul has plead with you. In my pastoral visits, I have aimed to be social, affectionate, and faithful. And in the discharge of all the duties, which have devolved upon me, I have been desirous of demeaning myself in that manner, which ever becomes a minister of Christ. How I have acquitted myself, you are judges, and a greater Judge still is Jesus Christ, before whom I expect to stand in special judgment, and whose approbation I have been solicitous to obtain. The Lord has crowned my feeble efforts in some measure with success. The Church is now nearly twice as large, as it was at the time of my settlement. The brethren

are three times as many in number. May it not be hoped too, that, as a body, the Church has become more spiritual. In some respects, there has been a gradual improvement. The Society also is now better able to support a minister, than when I commenced my labors among you. Besides being more able, the Parish is much more united in sentiments and feelings, as the perfect union and harmony, which have prevailed in my dismission, and in the settlement of a successor in office the same day, fully evince—a Pastor, who will, I trust,

“ Deal sincerely with your souls,
And preach the gospel for the gospel’s sake,”

and be the honored and happy instrument of bringing many sons and daughters to God and glory. In addition you have the unembarrassed possession of this new and convenient house for worship, instead of the one of many years; and you have it filled from Sabbath to Sabbath with a larger congregation of worshippers, than used formerly to assemble. It is a matter of pious gratitude, that, as minister and people, we have lived together and now separate in so much love and peace. Let us affectionately remember each other in our addresses at the throne of Divine Grace. There we can meet, and there let us meet, and unbosom ourselves in supplication to our common Father in heaven. Wherever I sojourn, the thought of you will awaken a thousand tender recollections. While memory lasts, I can never forget my residence among you. With you I should have been pleased to remain, till the conclusion of my days, for a variety of reasons; but God in his providence seemed to indicate my removal, and in the path of duty I have endeavored to walk. The course, which I have pursued, has been adopted after much prayer and consultation, and I trust it meets the approbation of Heaven, and of the wise and good, who may have been interested in the transaction.*

* See note B.

Beloved in the Lord, how should our hearts swell with gratitude in view of the blessings, which God has conferred upon us ! Harder than adamant, colder than the grave must they be, if they thrill not with the most grateful emotions ! How often " we have taken sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company ! " How often we have enjoyed the most delightful communion with our Father in heaven, lifted up our desires, and poured forth the warm effusions of our hearts to Him ! Around the sacramental table, we have unitedly pledged our love and obedience to our risen and reigning Saviour one hundred and twenty times. But I may never again drink with you the fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you and the ascended Saviour in our heavenly Father's kingdom. Dearly beloved, let us prepare for this joyful and celestial banquet. In the language of the apostle, I exhort you, " Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. " " Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, " and " beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. " " Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, " and let no " man beguile you with enticing words. " " Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. " " Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. " Feel your constant and entire dependence on the great Head of the Church. Live in love, union and peace. Maintain decision, firmness and candor in all that you do. " Pray without ceasing. " Be conversant with the secret closet and the family altar. Observe stated seasons of social prayer and religious conference. Seek for revivals of religion. These will ever be identified with your prosperity as a Church. Give assistance to your Pastor by your prayers, counsels, and labors. Thus you will be to him what Aaron and Hur were to Moses. So shall

God build you up in his most holy faith, increase you with his own increase, beautify you with the graces of his Spirit, and bless you with his great salvation. May the Lord God of Israel go before you in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, while you are going from Egypt to Canaan through this wilderness, world !

To the members of this Religious Society, I would present a few remarks. I congratulate you, my friends, on account of the smiles of Divine Providence, which you have hitherto enjoyed. God has succeeded you, in some respects, far beyond your most sanguine expectations. Would you still be favored by Him, walk in the way of his commandments. Let me inculcate upon you the directions, which have been laid down as conducive to the prosperity and happiness of a Society. You enjoy as much liberty in your religious rights and privileges as, in the nature of things, you can enjoy. Stand fast in this liberty ; let "no man take thy crown." "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." Exercise a spirit of Christian candour. Treat all, who may differ from you in matters of religion, with suitable respect and tenderness. But never abandon the faith and practice, which is dictated by your conscience and the word of God. Give all diligence in seeking the prosperity and happiness of this Society in the way which has been pointed out, and you will experience the benedictions of Heaven. The Lord will be to you a shield, a sure defence, a source of bountiful blessings. You will have nothing to fear, for "if God be for you, who can be against you." "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

The aged will suffer a word of advice. You have passed the meridian of your days. The close of life is at hand. You will soon enter upon the scenes of a boundless eternity. Multitudes already, who set out sojourners with you, are no longer pilgrims in this world of never ceasing vicissitudes and events. I congratulate those of you, my aged friends, who

have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you in the gospel. You have had some earnestness of that blessedness in reserve for the people of God. Joyful scenes are before you. While your days pass on, keep constantly in prospect the glorious immortality of the Christian. As the lamp of life burns dimly, the powers of body and mind become feeble and inactive, and you approach man's final home, live near to God in humility, faith, prayer, and hope. "All the days of your appointed time wait till your change come," that when He who is the believer's life shall appear, ye also may appear with Him in glory. But some of you I fear have resisted the Holy Ghost till now, and put far away the evil day, and fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Such of you can have no happiness in a retrospect of those days which are numbered and finished; and no pleasing hopes and anticipations of a blessed immortality in prospect. Let me beseech you now to return to your long forbearing Sovereign, even though it be the eleventh hour, for the gates of heaven are not yet closed against you. A space is granted you for repentance. It is not too late to believe. Sorrow then for your sins after a godly sort, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart. Arise and put on your wedding garment, and stand prepared and watching for the coming of the Bridegroom. Then will the evening of your days be peace, the closing scene of life tranquil and happy, and your eternity triumphant and glorious.

Of those in middle life, let me inquire, How have you spent the days of your earthly pilgrimage? What account of your heart and life can you give to God? Have you been laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal? or has the world—its riches, honors, and pleasures, engrossed your attention. "Set your affections," I entreat you, "on things above, not on things on the earth." Seek an inheritance in heaven, lest you die poor, though in possession of all this world can afford.

Spend the vigor of life in entire consecration to God, who made you, and the Saviour who died to redeem you. Work "while it is day ; the night cometh when no man can work." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." "Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And be not weary in well doing ; for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not."

Dear youth, you are just entering upon the theatre of life. The gay and busy scenes of time and sense engage your attention. But the world is delusive. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. Your anticipations of earthly good will never be realized. Nothing here is certain, permanent, or satisfying. Hopes of earthly bliss are but enchanting dreams of felicity. You must therefore look for happiness elsewhere, or never find it. Religion, pure and undefiled before God and the Father, is the only thing which can make you happy in life, happy in death, and happy to eternity. Seek it then as the "pearl of great price." Be entreated to do this by all the motives which two worlds can present. Let me urge you to do it immediately. Now is your most convenient season—your choosing time of life—your golden opportunity for religious attainments. By far the greater part of those, who become pious, are converted in early life. This is strikingly verified in the revivals of religion in the present day. God has specially proved the truth of His assurance, "Those that seek Him early shall find Him." Remember also, my young friends, that it becometh you "not to boast yourselves of to-morrow ; for you know not what a day may bring forth." Thousands have split on this fatal rock. To-morrow you may be in eternity.

"Each moment has its sickle, and cuts down
The fairest bloom of sublunary bliss."

Oh, then, be persuaded to imitate the example of Josiah, the pious king of Judah, and begin "while yet young to seek after the God of your fathers."

Parents, to you is committed an important trust. It is no less than to train up immortal souls for God and heaven. If you are faithful, you will clear the skirts of your garments, and may be the means of saving your children. If you are unfaithful, you will stand exposed to eternal indignation, and your children, through your neglect, may be lost forever. Do you then regard your children? Train them up in the way they should go; bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this way you may be instrumental in securing to them a happy life, a joyous death, and a blissful immortality. Do you regard your own selves? Give your children a pious education. Then, most likely, their amiable, filial and devout conduct will be a support and solace to you through life and in death. But should you betray your trust, you may finally weep for the irregularities of your child, and exclaim, in the anguish of your soul, "O, Absalom, my son, my son." Remember, also, that death, resurrection and judgment are approaching. "Death shall lay your bodies, and the bodies of your children, in the dust; but at the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, you" and your children "shall awake from the long slumbers of the grave to receive final doom." You, if holy, shall "re-embrace those pious children whom death tore from your arms." You shall "go before them to the throne of the Judge, and exclaim in humble triumph, Behold us, O God! and the children whom thou hast given us." You and your children shall receive a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give you in that day. But O, parents, how sad the reverse! I forbear to attempt a description. Eternity will disclose it with all its awful realities. I beseech you, then, by the worth of your own souls, and the souls of your dear children, to teach them early to seek the God of their fathers, and to "serve Him with a perfect heart and

with a willing mind." O, be faithful, be faithful to your responsible trust.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Hearken unto the voice of their instruction, and walk according to their precepts. The blessed Saviour invites you to come to Him—that Saviour, who, while he was on the earth, took little children into his arms and blessed them, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He loves you, and will be your Saviour, if you love Him, and look to Him for salvation. Many of you I have baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. May you all be baptized with the blood of Jesus—the blood of sprinkling, washed in the laver of spiritual regeneration. May you be the seed of Abraham by faith. And may the God of Abraham and his seed after him, establish with you his covenant for an everlasting covenant, and make you inheritors of its unspeakable blessings.

Dearly beloved brethren and friends, in the providence of God I am no longer your minister, and you are no longer the people of my charge. The account of my official labors among you is now sealed up for the day of judgment. O, how will it appear, when disclosed to the assembled universe! In that awful day, big with eternal consequences, when angels and men shall be judged and receive final doom, we must meet as minister and people, (solemn meeting!) I to give up an account how I have preached; you to give up an account how you have heard. What account can we render? In taking a faithful retrospect, must we not exclaim with the prophet, "Our leanness! our leanness!" O, our sinfulness! our sinfulness! Our Father in heaven forgive us, and seal to us an interest in thine everlasting love.

Jesus, thou friend of sinners, wash us in thine atoning blood, and enrich us with the blessings of thy great redemption. Holy Spirit, sanctify our hearts, that we may become the meet companions of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven. In the most devout aspirations of my soul, I affectionately commend you and your beloved Pastor to the benedictions of Heaven. May he be truly "a burning and a shining light" in this golden candlestick, and may you rejoice in his light, and he rejoice in your love. And now, with inexpressible emotions, emotions which I never before felt, and which are known only to a Pastor, I bid you all FAREWELL.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

The Constitution of Massachusetts secures to every citizen the right of applying the money, paid by him for the support of public worship, to the teacher on whose instruction he attends, provided there be any, whose instruction he can conscientiously receive. All religious societies are bound to support public worship, and yet all the members of such societies are at liberty to withdraw their support. How absurd then is the Constitution itself! And this absurdity is not mended much by the several statutes enacted by the legislature.

As none but corporate societies are included in the injunctions of the Constitution to support public worship, (there obviously being no legal means to *compel* any other societies to fulfil these injunctions,) it was, of course, held by the Court, under the statute of 1799, chap. 87, that a member of a territorial parish (which is a corporation) could not withdraw his taxes, imposed for support of religious worship, for the purpose of applying the money to the maintenance of a teacher of an unincorporated society. And the doctrine must have been the same, though the parish were not a territorial, but a poll parish. It must have been an incorporated parish. 6 Mass. Rep. Barnes *vs.* First Parish in Falmouth.

In consequence of this judicial doctrine, the statute of 1811, chap. 6, was enacted, by which all societies, whether corporate or unincorporate, were placed on equal ground, and the right of every citizen recognised to withdraw, not merely his money, but his person and his liability to taxation, from one society, and join himself to another. The constitutionality of this statute was settled in *Adams vs. Howe*, 14 Mass. Rep., and that it authorized removal from one society to another of the same denomination, in *Holbrook vs. Holbrook*, 1 Pick. Rep. Both these points were thoroughly considered, as they were zealously denied.

Until the statute of 1811, chap. 6, was passed, every inhabitant of any territory was a member of the parish where he resided, and liable to be taxed for parochial purposes, unless he was a Quaker, or a member of some other incorporated parish. If he were named in an act incorporating a poll parish, or even a territorial parish on other ground, he of course was a member of such parish only. Or if he procured a special act annexing him and his family, &c. to an extra-territorial parish, his connexion of course ceased with the territorial parish in which he resided, or with any other parish to which he formerly belonged.

It is therefore manifest, that before the act of 1811, every inhabitant was compellable to pay money (Quakers always excepted) for parochial charges in

the parish where he dwelt, unless he was by a special act of the legislature of some sort, transferred to another parish. If he worshipped nowhere and believed nothing, still he must pay parish taxes. If he were of a different sect or denomination from that of the parish where he lived, still he was taxable in that parish. And if he worshipped (usually attended) in an incorporated society of a different denomination, he might transfer his taxes to the clergyman on whose services he attended, by procuring a certificate from such clergyman, or a committee of the society that he in truth did usually attend on the instruction of such minister. Assessors also had authority to omit the taxing of such persons in 'their parish as were known to them to attend on the ministry of one of a different denomination.

Parishes, then, (Boston not being included,) were for more than thirty years after the adoption of the State Constitution (i. e. from 1780 to 1811) territorial corporations; and all the inhabitants of the territory (except Quakers) were, of course, and of necessity, unless exempted by special interference of the legislature, (such as including members of a territorial parish in an incorporated poll parish, or annexing them by nomination to some other parish,) members of the parish within whose bounds they dwelt. It was not a matter of option with the other parishioners, whether a new inhabitant should become a member of their society. The law gave him a right to the privileges of a parishioner; and the law also imposed on him the corresponding legal duties and liabilities.

When however the statute of 1811 was passed, a new character was given to parishes, and especially by the statute of 1823, chap. 106. They may be considered together, with reference to the question 'Whether a parish is obliged to receive as members all who demand to become such?' If they are, then are they of all corporations the most miserable, degraded and unprotected.

By the statute of 1811, chap. 6, any person becoming a member of a religious society, whether corporate or unincorporate, is to have his membership certified by a committee of such society (i. e. the new society that he joins) and the certificate is to be filed with the Clerk of the Town where he (i. e. the seceding parishioner) dwells, and such person is exempt forever, so long as he continues such membership, from taxation, &c. in all other societies whatsoever.

By the statute of 1823, chap. 106, any person may separate from one society and join another by filing with the Clerk of the society left, a certificate of the fact under the hand of the Clerk of the society which he elects to join.

The question then arises, 'Is the Committee under statute of 1811 or the Clerk under statute of 1823, obliged by law to issue certificates to all who demand them? or even to all who may actually attend the public worship of the society to which the Committee or the Clerk belong?'

It is to be noticed that such certificate is indispensable evidence of the separating from one society and the joining to another. It is by filing such a certificate, and in no other way, that the separating person exonerates himself from parochial liability where he formerly belonged.

The Committee, by the statute of 1811, are to be chosen for the purpose of issuing such certificates. Suppose a society, being satisfied with its situation and members, should neglect to elect a Committee. Is there any earthly power to compel the election of such Committee by the society? Doubtless there is not. It is an office not enjoined by law; it is merely authorized.

Suppose such Committee is chosen, but is instructed not to issue certificates without a vote of the society. There is no pretence, it is believed, for saying that a vote of the society to admit members can be enjoined and enforced by any man or body of men. The very requisition of a certificate of a Committee, would seem to settle the above question negatively. For why should a Committee of the society be chosen for the purpose of certifying a fact, and that certificate be made necessary evidence of the fact certified, unless some volition and discretion are supposed, and intended to be exercised by such Committee, or by their constituents, the society? Other proof of the fact of the separating member's attendance, &c. &c. might much more readily be procured. Under the statute of 1799, usual attendance was to be certified, but no such fact is required to exist now, much less to be certified.

Would the Clerk of a Quaker society be compelled to issue a certificate to every man who might demand it? If not, then why the Clerk of any other society? Can a Clerk control the destinies of a society, by admitting whom he pleases? It is preposterous so to hold. And equally preposterous to hold that he can prevent the admission of such as the society choose to admit. In both cases, he is to be governed by his instructions, or the fate of every society is placed in the hands either of the Clerk, or of strangers who may for any reasons, good or bad, insist on becoming members. This consideration alone ought to settle the point, were the law doubtful. But the law is not doubtful. If it had been intended to enforce the admission of every applicant into all the societies in the State, surely the Committees and the Clerks would have been enjoined by the statutes to issue certificates in all cases where applications were made. This would have been a most high-handed enactment—enactment it is presumed beyond legislative competency. It would have been utterly incompatible with all notions of equity, or liberty, and especially with the guaranty of secure enjoyment of freedom of religious worship.

Parishes are no longer exclusively regarded as territorial or as corporate bodies. Nor is religious worship of any sort, a condition of the enjoyment of parochial powers, or parochial duty, or a condition of exemption from the liabilities of the old parochial bodies. If the parishes or religious societies of the Commonwealth are bound to admit into their bosom infidels, scoffers, and all others on demand, whether willing or unwilling, then the laws have done all that is necessary to prostrate every religious society in the Commonwealth. A voting population may overrun and outvote all the churches and societies and dissipate their funds and desecrate their temples and altars. For the right of voting is incident to membership in all parishes, where other provisions are not specially made by the Legislature.

There is, it is true, a vestige of the old territorial notion still left in the

evil report—cheerfully consenting to be the servant of all men, for Jesus' sake. And while they indulge a strong confidence, that his usefulness in the cause of the Redeemer will be promoted by his removal to another sphere of action—they do most affectionately tender him their continued fellowship and prayers, and earnestly recommend him to the confidence and esteem of all Pastors and Churches, to whose acquaintance the Providence of God may introduce him—as a tried and approved brother in the ministry—a brother, whom we trust God will yet honor, with all those who turn many to righteousness, and who shall shine as stars forever and ever.

Voted, That the Council now adjourn, to meet at 9 o'clock, to-morrow morning.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, DEC. 16.

The Council met according to adjournment. The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and approved.

The Rev. Mr. FISK took the chair, at the earnest request of the Moderator of yesterday, and by appointment of the Council. It was then

Voted, That the Council now proceed to the examination of the Rev. H. G. PARK, the Pastor elect.

Documents were presented in relation to his call by the church and parish—together with his answer—his church membership, and license to preach—all which were sustained as regular.

The Council then heard from Mr. PARK a full and written confession of his faith; and proceeded to a verbal examination of his views of the great doctrines of the gospel, and of his experimental knowledge of the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit—and of his purposes and desires in seeking the work of the Christian ministry—which confession and examination were sustained.

Voted, That the Council are now ready to proceed to the ordination; and that the parts in the service be assigned as follows:

Introductory Prayer, to Rev. Mr. GAY.

Sermon, to Rev. Dr. PARK.

Ordaining Prayer, to Rev. Dr. WISNER.

Charge to the Pastor, to Rev. Mr. COGSWELL.

Fellowship of the Churches, to Rev. Mr. BURGESS.

Charge to the People, to Rev. Mr. FISK.

Concluding Prayer, to Rev. Mr. HITCHCOCK.

Voted, To adjourn to the meeting house, for the religious exercises of the day—at the close of which the Council will be dissolved.

ELISHA FISK, *Moderator*.

RICHARD S. STORRS, *Scribe*.

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